

The Electric Mercury

U.S. Army Medical Command Electronic News Summary, April 2002

**For more on these and other important stories, see April 2002 printed issue of The Mercury.
This is a service of the Public Affairs Office, Headquarters MEDCOM.**

Scientific group finds anthrax vaccine safe

The anthrax vaccine used by DoD is safe and effective against all forms of the deadly disease, says the Institute of Medicine, a private non-profit scientific group. Vaccination of military personnel was suspended for several years, as the sole vaccine maker sought FDA approval for a renovated facility. It is now licensed, and DoD is studying how to resume vaccinations. (With a sidebar article on how computer users have helped anthrax research by lending idle computer time for calculations to unlock the virus's secrets.)

AMEDD moves fast to bolster readiness

Since Sept. 11, military medical departments have felt a sense of urgency about getting ready for chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear terror attacks. In December, Army Surgeon General LTG James B. Peake directed a wide-ranging upgrade in training. Two months later, the AMEDD Center and School ran a big "train-the-trainers" course called "Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear and High Explosive (CBRNE)." Resident courses now embody more CBRNE training at all levels. (With a sidebar on a General Accounting Office report that spurred these training upgrades.)

Out-of-date DEERS records can lead to rejected claims

Rejection is not what jubilant retirees and their families expected when Congress created TRICARE for Life for beneficiaries over 65. Yet some elderly beneficiaries had claims rejected because they failed to keep their eligibility up-to-date in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS). DoD is taking steps to fix this. Main challenge: ensure retiree family members get their ID cards renewed every four years.

Guideline affects care for returning troops

DoD officials think caring for soldiers after deployment is a priority. They've devised guidelines for health-care professionals to care for service members with deployment-related health concerns. Providers now ask service members if their visits (other than routine check-ups) are related to deployment concerns. If so, the guidelines require certain steps, including a specific evaluation and follow-up visits.

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Other important stories in the April *Mercury* include:

- Praise for a deceased retired Sergeant Major of the Army and the promotion of three new AMEDD general officers highlight LTG James B. Peake's column. He also describes the pride he felt in Army Medicine upon hearing a casualty describe the care he's gotten.
- A page on Child Abuse Prevention Month includes an article on the role of dentists in detecting abuse and a commentary by nationally known expert Kenneth Wooden on how child sexual abuse leads to many subsequent health and social problems for victims.
- Senior Defense Department officials praise TRICARE improvements such as TRICARE for Life and improved claims processing during annual TRICARE conference.
- Military associations present joint "trust award" to TRICARE Management Activity, citing TRICARE improvements that boosted retirees' faith in military health care.
- Fox Army Health Center, Redstone Arsenal, Ala., gets Surgeon General's Award for Excellence. Also honored: Tripler Army Medical Center, Hawaii; Heidelberg, Germany, MEDDAC; Army Aeromedical Center, Fort Rucker, Ala.; Fort Jackson, S.C., MEDDAC.
- 101st Airborne Division physician assistant describes work in Afghanistan, fostering preventive medicine, treating patients and training medics (with several photos).
- Photo essay shows 212th Mobile Army Surgical Hospital exercise in Germany, in which 25 real surgeries were performed in a warehouse.
- More than 150 military and civilian personnel of DiLorenzo TRICARE Health Clinic in the Pentagon are honored for their actions following the Sept. 11 terrorist attack.
- LTC Michael Russo, director of neurosciences division, Walter Reed Army Institute of Research, receives Joint Chiefs of Staff Award for Excellence in Military Medicine.
- Lynch Dining Facility, 1st Medical Brigade, Fort Hood, Texas, takes runner-up in its category in 2002 Phillip A. Connelly Awards for Excellence in Army Food Service.
- Photos: SSG Maxine Bowers plays panicked casualty as SPC Andrew Harris treats her during Best Medic Competition, Fort Belvoir, Va.; medical equipment is secured to litter using device designed by SSG Eric Smeed, Institute of Surgical Research; SGT Gerone Lewis, 4th Infantry Division, demonstrates treatment for cardiac arrest in Kuwait.
- Commentary: "NCO leaders build success with boards," by SSG Patrick Rose, 571st Medical Company (Air Ambulance); and "Along life's road, beauty soothes the savage beast," by Mary McClure, Fort Sill, Okla.
- U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine experts explain importance of screening to catch colorectal cancers early and describe how to judge the reliability of health information on the Internet.